Analogy

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analogy, the similarity along with difference, among meanings, among sorts of thinking, and among realities. Analogy theory originated with *Aristotle in its three main parts: analogy of meaning, analogous thinking, and analogy of being. There were some antecedents in *Plato, where the names of Forms and of participating things are the same but differ in meaning, and the notion of ‘being’ is said to differ with what we are talking about, for example Forms versus physical things (Sophist). Systematic use of the three elements to unify philosophy and to resolve problems is, however, Aristotle's invention along with the idea that *metaphor is a species of analogy. Aristotle distinguished what were later called analogies of attribution, based on causation, signs, symptoms, and representations (medical skill, medical supplies; hat/head cover, hat/in picture), from analogy based on proportionality, A: B :: C : D; where the common implicit predicate is related in meaning (supplied food;

supplied financing), but not the same in meaning as it is in the arithmetic proportion 4: 8 :: 8 :16 (one half). There are two sorts:

proper proportionality (a medieval title), such as the pair, 'The aspirin relieved his headache", 'The reinforcements relieved the garrison', and metaphor, such as 'Jove sowed rosy rays on the dawn' vs. 'the farmer sowed wheat in the field'.

Two main uses of analogy were Aristotle's saying that 'being' as exhibited in the ten categories is analogous with a primary sense for substances. Thus the sense in which a human exists is primary and prior to the sense in which we say his weight, height, or colour exists. Aristotle implicitly held that since concepts are abstractions from things and are the meanings of words, analogy of meaning tracks analogy of being. The second main use of proportionality is the adaptation of the 'matter/form' and 'act/potency' distinction, and the like, and of the senses of 'cause' (formal, efficient, material, and final) to varying contexts throughout philosophy of nature,

*metaphysics, and moral theory, so for instance, gold is said to be the material cause of a statue of Pericles and flesh and bones the material cause of Socrates. Thus in Posterior Analytics the. premisses of a demonstration are said to be the cause of the conclusion, and in boat-building the wood is the material cause of the boat.

Similarly, with the rediscovery of Aristotle and the adaptation of his ideas by Albert the Great and Thomas *Aquinas in the 13th century, analogy in all three aspects, of meaning, thought, and being, became a general and fundamental theory which took on a special development in the discussion of the relation of creatures to

*God (See natural theology). Aquinas adapted what was originally a Platonic and Neoplatonic notion of 'participation', probably from Plotinus and Proclus, to function in an Aristotelian metaphysical context, to explain that the creature's being is a participation in the being of God, The difference is that (1) the being of the creature is its own but is by continuous divine causation and (2) finitely reflects God's infinite perfection. For the history of these ideas, with many citations, see Lyttkens.

So, analogy came as a solution of the dilemma facing religious discourse—that if words we use for creatures apply in the same sense to God, the talk will be mere anthropomorphism and false, but if the words are merely equivocal (unrelated in meaning) then the talk is unintelligible and meaningless—a solution adapted from metaphysics, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of '"language, not fashioned for religion in the first place.

Besides inventing his own doctrine of participated being, Aquinas, in opposition to Avicenna, argued for a real distinction between essence and existence in creatures and the absence of such a distinction in God. For Aquinas, existence is related to essence (what-it-is) in creatures as fulfillment to capacity, and thus as act to potency. For him, whatever is related as act to potency is really distinct from it. In God there is no relation of fulfillment to capacity, and thus no real distinction of essence and existence. A consequence is that participated being is the basis for predication of pure perfections (like being, life, intelligence and love—predicates that imply no limitation and are all mutually compatible) of both creatures and God, with carry-over of the content (the res significata) but with a contextual adjustment of the manner of meaning (the modus significandi) that reflects the differences in the manner of being (modus essendi), just as 'really exists' does when applied to substances (cats), quantities (litres), qualities (snub-nosed), and relations (being nearby), as well as pauses, space, *time, and money. Disagreements over whether the term 'being' is univocal or analogous, as applied to God and creatures (Duns Scotus, 0.1300, and William of Ockham, 0.1320, held that it is univocal), were more intense than disputes about whether predicates applied to God are analogous; that was substantially accepted once it was formulated. And even now, apart from fundamentalists, evangelicals, and *process theorists (Hartshome) who think God suffers and changes in the same sense that we do, the general position of *theologians is one or another variant, rejected by *Thomists, of the idea that words applied to creatures and to God differentiate in the God-talk, but nearly always with the result that some non-literal form of discourse becomes fundamental for religion: for instance, *Tillich's idea that all true talk about God is 'symbolic', not literal; Karl *Barth's substitution of analogia fidei for Aquinas's analogia entis (in effect, holding that the difference of meaning in common words applied to both creatures and God, for example 'loves', is not explained by the metaphysical differences of the things, but by the role of such words in scriptural narrative, thus holding that words 'gain a proper sense from the revelatory context'); *Ricoeur's idea that talk about God involves ‘double meaning' characteristic of *symbols and metaphors that forces endless interpretation (*hermeneutics) of the meaning 'in front of religious texts'. Even more uncongenial to analogy theorists are the ideas of Derrida, Barthes, Lacan, and Kristeva, applying to all texts and speech, who claim to find ever self-referring, ever-shifting textures in all, reflecting shifting social conditions, and so on, with no fixed meaning—they all conflict with Aquinas's basic idea that analogies of attribution and of proper proportionality that are at the foundation of our knowledge of

God are paradigmatically literal and are derived from our perception of ourselves and of the physical world.

Aquinas also acknowledged varieties of religious discourse, to which the basic theory of meaning involving univocal, merely equivocal, and analogous (both literal and metaphorical) predication, applies. Aquinas distinguished statements 'vantaged' (not his word) in our spatio-temporal condition, statements belonging of necessity to popular piety, for instance 'God knows what I will do tomorrow', 'God will answer my prayers, forgive my sins, and bring me to eternal life', from statements belonging to the 'scientific' (again my word) description of God, for instance 'for God there is no past or future, only one perfect present, no plurality of acts'. He distinguished truths 'according to the appearance of things', as 'The stars are the ornament of the heavens,' said by Moses to an 'ignorant and unlettered people' who would not understand that the stars are the substance of the heavens, the reality of things (ST I q. 68 a. 3, and q. 70. a. I ad. 3; De potentia, 4. 2, ad. 30). He distinguished the legal meaning in the Old Law from the 'spiritual' meaning of its precepts (Comm. on Hebrews). He allowed, in the interpretation of the scripture, for allegorical, typical, prophetic, symbolic, and *mystical meanings (ST I-II, q. 104 a. 2. ad. 2). So would an analogy theorist today.

Once the 20th-century dispute that originated in logical positivism (consider A. J. Ayer's renowned 1933 popularization of it) about empirical verifiability withered away because the original principle of verification failed its own test and, when revised, excluded nothing as meaningless—a dispute that generated a vast literature, including unwise surrenders to its mistaken assumptions by Braithwaite's and Ian Ramsey's 'empirical placing of religious predicates' and John Hick's 'eschatological pragmatism'—the enquiry returned to how we can talk meaningfully about a transcendent being, one beyond our capacity to experience on our own, and was supplied with various accounts of analogy of meaning (for example Austin Farrer, E. L. Mascall, R. Maclnemy, D. Burrell, D. *Tracy). Some others (see J. Ross) emphasize internal linguistic structures that explain the contrasting adaptation of words to diverse linguistic environments, with religious discourse, as well as moral and aesthetic talk, being an orderly, normal, subcase of universal semantic regularities, of 'semantic contagion', not different from what we can find in any craft-bound discourse and anywhere where discourse is adapted to modifying human action and commitment, e.g. 'He answered: /the door/the telephone/the questions/the petition/the complaint.' Still, nonsense is common enough, particularly in philosophy and religion, but in law, medicine, and everywhere else. In fact, analogy of meaning, metaphor, and our ability to make abstractions upon abstractions explains how semantically well-formed utter nonsense can be produced:

'Thingness evokes essential being.'

The basic medieval/Aristotelian principle was that meaning differentiation of a word reflects reality differences in what it is used for, and it is analogical thinking (analogia rationis) by which real analogy (analogia entis) is recognized, for instance the analogy among the dielectric polarization, mechanical elasticity, and heat capacity of solids; each feature is reversible, each can cause the others to change, and even the quantitative changes are proportional to one another—bending tin will make heat; heating it will bend it. Recognizing verbal and visual analogies marks one's inventive intelligence. Aristotle remarked (Poetics, 22. I459a) 'the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the

one thing that cannot be learned from others.' It is a mark of genius, he said, and (Rhetoric, 3. 2) a good metaphor 'puts the matter before the eyes'.

Contrasting meanings do track contrasting realities, but not in the neat and unerring way Aquinas thought, though, of course, some still hold Aquinas's views unrevised. Yet there is no conflict between a more linguistic emphasis in explaining analogy of meaning and still holding a metaphysics of participation between the world and God. It is now unusual for Anglo-American philosophers to say there is something linguistically odd or deviant about talk of God, grace, sin, or salvation, partly because the *Wittgensteinian idea that linguistic propriety and sense is determined entirely by use, by our speech practices, has become well entrenched,

Whatever borderline there was thought to be between 'literal', 'metaphorical', and 'symbolic' meaning was never clear, even among recent writers on metaphor (M. Black, N. Goodman, Eva Kittay, P. Ricoeur) and has now disappeared among those who recognize that such terms are contrast-dependent so that a word (drop/a glass) that is literal with respect to another occurrence (drop/a pen) may be at the same time metaphorical in relation to a third (drop/a course). There is no current classification of how the differentiations of meaning for a given word reflect or are responses to differences in reality. That will have to be restarted.

Wittgenstein happened upon the phenomenon that he called 'family resembling terms' but did not explain it or realize that it is universal, law-governed, linguistic regularity (see J. Ross); nor did he remark that the endlessly differentiating senses of 'because', 'knows', 'proves' and everything else philosophers examine may reflect differences in what we talk about, and will defeat any single-pattern Socratic, or even Russellian, contextual definition. Philosophers and theologians have just not caught on to the semantic regularities of analogy, the centrality of analogous thinking, or the importance of analogies in reality. But they will.

See also religious language.

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